



For Immediate Release:
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Agreement Proposed to Improve Scientific Understanding of Salmon and Steelhead Protections in the South Delta

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco and California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird today announced a proposed agreement regarding new south Delta water operations. The proposed agreement among the National Marine Fisheries Service, the California Department of Water Resources, and public water agencies, will improve scientific understanding of potential salmon and steelhead benefits to new water operations in the south Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta this spring.

"This agreement is the direct result of concerted efforts by the state of California, water contractors, NOAA, and our federal partners to find constructive solutions to the challenges of water and fish management in the Central Valley," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the NOAA Administrator.

The proposed agreement establishes new approaches to managing state and federal water project operations in the south Delta that will target and test benefits to salmon and steelhead while determining ways to protect water supplies. The test period will be through April and May 2012.

"It's a small but important step in getting science out of the courtroom and into technical venues that can actually improve the balance between the water needs of salmon and steelhead, and more than 25 million Californians," said California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird.

Elements of the proposed agreement include installing a seasonal rock barrier at the head of Old River to help keep steelhead from straying toward the pumps where mortality occurs, establishing a broader range of potentially permissible "reverse flows" in the lower Old and Middle rivers, and broadening acoustic tagging of fish to gather more precise information on migratory patterns. The proposed agreement can be found here <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/drlubchencovisitswr.htm>

In 2011, the federal court in Fresno, Calif. found that NOAA's 2009 biological opinion under the federal Endangered Species Act governing the operation of the state and federal water projects was flawed in certain respects, and the court has ordered NOAA to develop a new opinion by February 2016. This proposed agreement for 2012 addresses several specific parameters pertaining to south Delta operations that have been a focus of litigation.

The U.S. Department of Justice will request approval of the proposed agreement with the U.S. District Court in Fresno. The court may schedule a hearing on the proposal, or otherwise solicit comments from all parties, and then decide whether to accept the proposed agreement, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

Media Call Information:

What: Media Call Regarding South Delta Agreement
When: Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012 at 10:45 a.m. PST
Who: [Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator](#)
[John Laird, California Secretary for Natural Resources](#)
Where: (800) 398-9367

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